DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 266 285 CE 043 568

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TITLE Deafness: A Guide for Employers & Employment Counselors.
INSTITUTION Rutgers, The State Univ., New Brunswick, N.J. Inst. of Management and Labor Relations.
SPONS AGENCY New Jersey State Dept. of Labor, Trenton.
PUB DATE Jan 85
NOTE 24p.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Accessibility (for Disabled); Communication Aids (for Disabled); *Communication Problems; Deaf Interpreting; *Deafness; Definitions; Employment Patterns; *Employment Potential; Employment Practices; Federal Legislation; *Hearing Impairments; Individual Needs; Job Placement; Resources; *Stereotypes

ABSTRACT

This booklet is intended to assist employers and employment counselors in learning more about deafness. The material discusses the myths and stereotypes surrounding hearing-impaired persons and shows how, through accommodations in the workplace, deaf and hard-of-hearing persons can become reliable and productive employees. Addressed in the individual sections of the guide are the following topics: the meaning of the terms deafness, hearing impairment, and hard-of-hearing; ways of overcoming communication barriers; things deaf persons are capable of doing; the benefits of hiring and upgrading deaf workers; the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) and deaf persons; biographical sketches of deaf persons at work; and primary resources available to persons employing and/or counseling deaf individuals. (MN)

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Deafness: a guide for employer & employment counselors

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HD4 3528

DEAFNESS: A GUIDE FOR EMPLOYERS & EMPLOYMENT COUNSELORS

This manual was prepared by Aram L. Terzian and Marjorie E. Saari of the Center for Human Resources, Institute of Management and Labor Relations, Rutgers, the State University. The Center gratefully acknowledges the assistance and financial support of the New Jersey Department of Labor, Division of the Deaf. The material contained in this report does not necessarily represent the official opinion of the New Jersey Department of Labor. The authors are solely responsible for the contents.

January, 1985

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PREFACE

The information contained in the booklet was developed to assist employers and employment counselors in learning more about deafness. The material discusses the myths and stereotypes surrounding hearing-impaired persons and shows how, through accommodations in the workplace, deaf and hard-of-hearing persons can become reliable and productive employees.

If you are interested in more information, please refer to the resource guide in the back of this booklet for a list of schools, organizations and support services available to hearing-impaired persons.

As explained in this guide, interpreters can be arranged for by contacting the New Jersey Division of the Deaf at (609) 984-7281 or (800) 792-8339 voice or TDD.

DEAFNESS: A GUIDE FOR EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYMENT COUNSELORS

I. DEAFNESS DEFINED

- Deaf persons can neither hear nor understand most speech.
- Many deaf and hard-of-hearing persons have different speech patterns.
- The ability to use speech is not related to a deaf person's intelligence.

The term "deafness" generally refers to an inability to hear or understand the spoken word. For the purposes of this guide, the following are definitions of terms used in the text:

hearing impairment - any degree of hearing loss resulting in diminished ability to hear and understand language.

deafness - a hearing loss which results in an inability to hear or understand the spoken word even with a hearing aid. The primary means of receiving spoken language becomes lipreading, sign language, gestures and writing.

hard-of-hearing - a degree of hearing loss which restricts but does not entirely prevent hearing or understanding the spoken word.

Although accurate figures are not available, it is estimated by Schein and Delk in their study, The Deaf Population of the United States, that there are 237,000 persons in New Jersey with some type of significant hearing loss in both ears. Of those, 49,000 are estimated to be deaf.

Children who are born deaf, or lose their hearing before the age of three, have difficulty developing clear speech. Speech and language is learned by imitation of sound. For a deaf child who is unaware of sound, rhythm, pitch and intonation, which hearing children mimic, speech development is a slow and difficult process. However, through special training and practice, many deaf children can learn to speak understandably. A deaf person even with training, may mispronounce words, leave out sounds, use words in a different pitch or rhythm. However, speaking with that person familiarizes the hearing person with the individual speech pattern and communication becomes easier with time. A person deafened after the age of three, when language has been established, is likely to have clearer, more understandable speech. Many hearing persons mistakenly think that the ability to speak is in some way related to the deaf person's overall capabilities. It is important to emphasize that research shows that the ability to use speech and language is <u>not</u> related to intelligence and cannot be used as a measure of a person's ability to learn a vocation.

Deaf persons have the same broad spectrum of intelligence and talent found in the general population. Their deafness causes them to communicate in different ways, but this should not detract from their recognized ability to hold down jobs and be productive and valuable employees.

II. OVERCOMING THE COMMUNICATION BARRIER

- Deaf persons commonly use sign language, lipreading and writing to communicate.

- Sign language interpreters can be hired to help in communications.
- Deaf persons can use the telephone with the aid of a special telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD).
- Hearing aids have limited uses for deaf persons.
- Hard-of-hearing persons can often use the telephone with the aid of special amplification devices.

The most common method of communication used by deaf persons is sign language. Sign language communicates words and feelings through hand gestures, finger spelling and facial and body movements. Finger spelling, reproduction of each letter of the alphabet through finger movements, spells out words letter by letter. Generally, deaf persons use finger spelling in addition to signs rather than using finger spelling exclusively. Ideas and names of objects for which no signs exist are finger spelled. American Sign Language is the type of sign language most often used by deaf persons. ASL, as it is frequently called, uses hand gestures and body movements to express words and whole phrases. ASL is a language in itself that does not follow the usual English language syntax and structure but communicates the message through concepts.

Deaf persons communicate with hearing persons through various methods. Generally, no single method is used exclusively, but a combination of different means is employed. Some deaf persons can communicate primarily by lipreading. The mistaken impression exists that all deaf persons are excellent lipreaders. This idea is incorrect. Watching television with the sound turned off shows how extremely difficult it is to read the lips of another person. Research has clearly shown that only about 30 percent of words formed by the lips can be clearly

understood. Several speech sounds, such as b and p, or t and d, look exactly alike on the lips when produced. In addition, lighting, a moustache, or a particular manner of speaking by an individual may hinder lipreading.

Writing is another common method of communication, used frequently between a deaf person and a hearing person with no sign language skills. Writing notes is often a slower method of communication but is an effective means of sharing thoughts. The average deaf student graduating from high school is reading and writing below grade level because of reduced English language ability. Therefore, written communications with most deaf persons should be in clear, straightforward language, using simple vocabulary and short sentences. Idiomatic expressions, colloquial language, analogies and complex abstractions should all be avoided. However, it is important to reiterate that intelligence is not related to skillful use of the English language. To communicate effectively with a deaf person, remember to do the following:

- Get the deaf person's attention, if necessary, by a touch on the hand or arm.
- Look directly at the deaf person; do not turn away and speak.
- Speak normally and do not exaggerate your lip movements.
- Do not talk with a cigarette or pipe in your mouth.
- Do not assume a smile or nod by the deaf person indicates clear understanding.
- Repeat information until you feel it is understood, using writing if necessary. Get feedback to ensure understanding.
- Avoid sitting or standing where there is a strong light source at your back since this may cause a shadow across the face and make lipreading more difficult.

When a deaf person wishes to communicate with hearing persons through sign language, an interpreter may be necessary. As a trained professional, an interpreter assists in translating signs into spoken English and English into sign. An interpreter is a highly skilled individual with many years of training and practice in interpreting. An interpreter, who usually learns the skill in the classroom or from deaf family members, must pass a competency-level test before receiving certification as a professional interpreter. Bound by a code of ethics, an interpreter must keep all information confidential and interpret as accurately as possible without injecting his/her own opinions. When speaking to a deaf person through an interpreter, remember the following:

- Always look at the deaf person, not at the interpreter when you are speaking.
- Speak directly to the deaf person; do not use phrases such as "tell her/him..."
- Speak normally; an interpreter is capable of keeping up with the average speaker's rate of speech.
- Allow interpreter to act as communication facilitator, do not ask for his/her opinions or assistance.
- Relax, it is not uncommon to feel tense in a new situation. Communication is very successful through the interpreter.

A TTY or TDD (telecommunication device for the deaf) is a communication aid that allows a hearing-impaired or deaf person to use the telephone and communicate with another person who also has a TDD. Typewriter-like in appearance, a TDD makes it possible for a deaf person to type messages which appear on a paper printout or on a screen and are transmitted via telephone lines to another person with a TDD unit. These units are becoming available in public facilities such as police and fire stations,

libraries, hospitals and offices, as well as in the homes of deaf persons. The Rutgers University survey, "Employment and Related Life Experiences of Deaf Persons in New Jersey," indicates that 30 percent of the individuals sampled had access to TTY/TDD in their homes. Some deaf persons, knowing their limited language skills, or having an inability to type, are reluctant to use the TDD and rely on hearing family members or friends to communicate via the telephone for them when it is necessary. The high cost of a TDD also prevents some deaf persons from purchasing these units.

Some hard-of-hearing employees, depending on the degrees of hearing loss, can use a standard telephone if the receiver is equipped with special amplification equipment. The local telephone office can provide an employer with the necessary information on this equipment.

Hearing aids are used by some deaf persons to assist in locating sound and in modulating their speech. Others use hearing aids to make it possible for them to react to emergency sounds such as alarms and sirens. However, since hearing aids can only amplify sound and not make it clearer, many deaf persons and hard-of-hearing persons choose not to wear a hearing aid, finding the amplification more of an annoyance than a help.

III. WHAT DEAF PERSONS DO

- Deaf persons are employed in a variety of occupations.
- Deaf persons are frequently placed in traditional jobs.
- Deaf persons can be successful in non-traditional jobs.

Several major studies over the years have shown that deaf persons are employed in a large variety of occupations. This finding has been

confirmed by the Rutgers survey of the New Jersey deaf population. The survey, commissioned by the Division of the Deaf and completed by the Center for Human Resources, identified deaf persons between the ages of 16 and 64 from throughout the state. A random sample of 832 deaf persons was interviewed by persons proficient in sign language. The survey sample identified a total of 196 different occupational categories held by deaf workers in New Jersey. Most of these occupations are in jobs that require some speaking, signing skills, and taking of instructions. Typical occupational categories in which deaf persons in New Jersey are employed include:

Printing machine operators
Typesetters and compositors
Janitors and cleaners
Auto body and related repairs
Assemblers
Machinists
Hand packers and packagers
Postal service clerks
Data entry keyers
Textile sewing machine operators
Typists
General office clerks
Bookkeepers, accounting and audit clerks

Few deaf persons are in occupations that require more complex oral skills. It is essential that an employer evaluate the oral skills of each individual deaf person to determine his/her ability to communicate. Often deaf persons, capable of more complex communication skills, are kept out of jobs because an employer views them as being capable of handling only traditional occupations.

Deaf persons frequently obtain high school diplomas from public or private schools. Many attend the Marie Katzenbach School for the Deaf in Trenton, a state-supported school exclusively for deaf students, where they are taught academic and vocational skills. Others graduate from high schools where they attend classes with hearing students. Five percent of the deaf persons sampled by the Rutgers survey held a bachelor's or higher degree from a college or university. Many of these people were educated at Gallaudet College in Washington, D.C., or at the Rochester Institute of Technology, National Technical Institute for the Deaf, Rochester, New York. Gallaudet College, established under President Lincoln, is the only liberal arts undergraduate college exclusively for deaf persons in this country. The National Technical Institute is part of the Rochester Institute of Technology. Founded by an act of Congress in 1965, NTID educates students who are deaf in such varied fields as engineering, social work, paramedical services, accounting, business, computer science, art and photography, communication design and media production. Major corporations such as Xerox, Kodak, U.S. Steel, I.B.M., and A.T.&T. actively recruit the graduates of N.T.I.D. California State University at Northridge, also has a bachelor's degree program for deaf students, where most students prepare for careers in special education or rehabilitation. Employers should be aware of the variety of skills deaf persons can acquire if they have the education or training opportunities. Some examples of non-traditional occupational categories in which New Jersey deaf persons are employed are as follows:

Administrators and officials, public administration
Finance managers
Physical therapists

Teachers
Counselors, social workers, recreation workers
Librarians
Designers
Supervisors and proprietors, sales occupations
Insurance sales occupations
Sales workers
Supervisors, production occupations

In addition to these occupations, deaf persons in New Jersey are employed in a variety of technical occupations that require post-secondary training. Examples of such occupational categories are:

Accountants and auditors
Computer systems analysts and scientists
Computer programmers
Chemists
Pharmacists
Editors and reporters
Clinical laboratory technologists and technicians
Health technologists and technicians
Drafting occupations
Electrical and electronic technicians
Biological technicians

IV. HIRING AND UPGRADING DEAF WORKER

- Qualified deaf persons can be found to fill positions.
- Deaf persons may need assistance with the job application and interview process.
- Deaf persons are often unfairly held back from job advancement.
- Deaf persons can be upgraded by on-the-job training.

A company committed to hiring deaf persons must find qualified candidates for their vacant positions. Fortunately, increasing levels of education and training for deaf persons is providing a market of qualified candidates who, like their hearing counterparts, are looking for jobs

with advancement opportunities. Qualified deaf persons can be located through Gallaudet College or the National Technical Institute for the Deaf. The addresses of these institutions can be found in the final section of this publication. The local offices of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Service can help an employer locate a qualified job applicant who is deaf. In addition, contacts can be made through clubs and organizations for the deaf, as well as through churches for the deaf. The New Jersey Division of the Deaf office in Trenton is also a source of information for an employer interested in hiring deaf persons. Job openings can be advertised in newsletters or newspapers that are directed toward the deaf community. A company can consider hiring deaf persons for work study or summer employment as another way of locating qualified candidates.

Language barriers cause many interviewees who are deaf to have difficulty with job applications and job interviews. Many of the questions on the applications use language and phrasing that may be difficult for some deaf persons to understand. Employers can help by making certain their employment applications ask questions in a straightforward manner. Assistance should also be given to the deaf person who is having difficulty. Remember, language skill does not reflect the intelligence of the deaf person.

Deaf persons who primarily communicate in American Sign Language may have difficulty in an oral interview with an employer. The Rutgers survey found that many deaf persons will frequently bring a hearing person with sign language skills to the interview to assist with communications. This can be a helpful way to aid in the interview. However, it can also take away from understanding the qualifications

of the deaf person if the hearing friend speaks for the deaf person rather than interpreting for him/her. It is highly desirable for the employer to enlist the aid of a professional sign language interpreter to be sure that the interview will bring out the best in the deaf person and help the employer understand the person's potential for the job. If tests are used, an employer should make certain the prospective deaf employee understands the directions and can read the material. Due to the language problems described earlier, it may be necessary to allow the deaf person extra time to read and understand the test material. It also may be necessary to have an interpreter assist with the test administration.

When a deaf person is hired, it is advisable for the employer to alert the new employee's co-workers to the deaf person's special needs. Seminars in deaf awareness and deaf orientation can be arranged through the New Jersey Division of the Deaf. An understanding of deafness by the staff will help make a smooth transition period for the new employee.

Once on the job, the deaf employee, as any new employee, needs adequate orientation. An additional support network may be necessary to insure the deaf person's acclimation to the new work environment. It is advisable to provide information in writing about the company, its benefit plans, regulations and policies. Make sure the employee understands this material thoroughly. It is often helpful to have an experienced employee assume some responsibility for making the deaf person feel at home by including him/her in any socialization that may take place.

If the job has telephone responsibilities and the deaf person is unable to use the telephone, some necessary accommodations can be made. A sharing of the phone responsibility among the hearing co-workers and an adjustment of the workload will often alleviate the problem.

Providing a TDD, as described earlier, in the office, will allow the deaf person to communicate with others who have similar equipment. If the deaf person has a TDD at home or has a portable TDD available, he/she would be able to phone the office from home or while on a field assignment.

When group meetings are scheduled, it is helpful for the deaf employee to receive the agenda and any written material in advance. Decide, with the input of the employee, if an interpreter is needed. If an interpreter is not needed, encourage the deaf person to sit where he/she can see the speaker's face. It is also very helpful to have a co-worker act as a notetaker for the deaf person. The deaf person can then review and clarify the issues discussed at the meeting at a later date. Encourage the deaf person to participate in group discussion and offer his/her opinions. Speakers should identify themselves and/or be recognized so that the deaf person can locate the person speaking. Remember, even with the aid of a professional interpreter, a slight time lag occurs before the deaf person is able to catch up with the conversation and have an opportunity to join in the discussion.

Frequently, an interest in communication with a deaf person by fellow employees will result in informal or formal sign language training

classes given by the deaf employee or by a professional sign language instructor. Anxieties and apprehensions on the part of the staff will often disappear when better communication and understanding takes place.

Research shows that qualified deaf persons are often held back from advancement on the job. It is typically assumed that deaf persons are unable to supervise other employees. However, in some instances the deaf worker who is passed over for job advancement is the most qualified to do the work. It is essential that the employer carefully evaluate both the communication needs of the supervisory position and the skills of the deaf employee before making a decision. The employer should consider the purchase of a TDD to make telephone communication possible for the deaf person. The employer should also consider hiring an interpreter for occasional use. Investments like these will usually result in promoting a highly motivated and conscientious employee. The Rutgers survey of deaf persons showed that many deaf workers have lengthy work histories, the median time on the job being four years and eight months. A loyal, dependable employee is an important asset for any company.

On-the-job training is one very important way a person progresses within a company. Often deaf persons are not offered opportunities for such training because the employer believes that the deaf employee will have difficulty with communications during the training. As a result, a good employee becomes frustrated and disillusioned resulting in a loss to both the individual and to the company. Employers should carefully consider the abilities of the deaf employee for the new training. Minor job modifications can usually be made which will enable the deaf person to successfully assume the new role after training. When oral communi-

cations are an important part of the training, it can be greatly facilitated with the use of a sign language interpreter. Although it represents an investment of funds over what is used for a hearing employee, the long term benefits of having a dedicated, trained employee will outweigh the cost.

V. JTPA AND DEAF PERSONS

- Deaf persons can be eligible for and participate in JTPA training programs.

The Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) is providing deaf persons with an opportunity to participate in employment and training programs. The deaf community is being encouraged to participate in training programs for which they qualify. Under Title II of JTPA, handicapped adults, whose income meets the criteria for economically disadvantaged, are eligible for job training assistance. Deaf persons who are not economically disadvantaged may still be eligible under the 10 percent "window". This provides that up to 10 percent of the JTPA program participants may be eligible regardless of income if they have encountered barriers to employment due to their handicap.

When interviewing a deaf client, all interviewers and intake counselors need to be familiar with the material in the previous sections relating to overcoming the communication barrier. It is also very important that these individuals be familiar with the traditional areas where deaf persons are employed as well as the areas where deaf persons could successfully be employed.

A deaf person applying for training under JTPA will be certified as handicapped by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and then referred to the JTPA intake office for additional assessment and, if possible, assignment to specific training.

It is important for counselors and interviewers to recognize that Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 guarantees the hearing impaired or deaf person access to programs receiving federal financial assistance. Making JTPA intake, assessment, and training programs accessible to a deaf person may require the special accommodations discussed previously. Personnel responsible for these areas should be aware of the role of interpreters and how they can contribute to making intake, assessment, and training a successful experience of the deaf person. The Division of the Deaf can be contacted to arrange for hiring an interpreter. The Division's phone number is included in the list of agencies at the end of this publication. The interpreter cost can be minimized if several hard-of-hearing or deaf persons can be served at one time. The JTPA will provide eligible deaf and hard-of hearing persons an opportunity to take advantage of a wide variety of training programs.

VI. BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF DEAF PERSONS AT WORK

Paul, age 32, recently graduated from Gallaudet College with a degree in accounting. The accounting field has potential for growth for a promising young professional and he eagerly sought employment. Paul made the usual job search efforts by sending out resumes and registering with employment agencies. His job search, however, was made more difficult by his deafness. Scarlet fever contracted as a child caused Paul to lose his hearing and have speech that was not easily understood. Therefore, he communicated mostly through gesture, lipreading and writing notes. His communication disability became the point on which interviewers focused rather than his ability, education and motivation.

Determined, Paul continued seeking employment in his chosen field. He registered as a client with the New Jersey Department of Labor's Division of the Deaf, Employment Services and Vocational Rehabilitation Service. The Division of the Deaf scheduled Paul for an interview with a small accounting firm. The interview went well and the employer was impressed with Paul's credentials. The position was for one of two accountants to be hired for a new project. Unfortunately, due to the employer's small staff, there was an unavoidable demand for Paul to use the telephone. What he could not do became more significant then what he could do and the company decided against hiring Paul.

As a husband and father of two small children, Paul desperately needed employment. Although fearful of being underemployed, he requested that the state agencies find him any job. He was willing to work as a janitor, dishwasher or cook, just to have enough income to support his family.

Two months later, the Division of the Deaf scheduled an interview with another accounting firm. Again an interpreter assisted in the interview and again it appeared that Paul's inability to use the telephone would be the barrier preventing him from being hired. However, the Division of the Deaf approached the company and asked them to make some reasonable job accommodations.

It was pointed out that a co-worker could assume Paul's telephone responsibilities and Paul would then be free to accept additional duties. The accommodations were agreed upon and Paul started work within two weeks. The telephone accommodations worked successfully and Paul has become a valuable employee of the firm. Contacted a year

later, his employer indicated Paul had received very good evaluations and was making an important contribution to the success of the company.

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

Bruce graduated in 1978 from Marie Katzenbach School for the Deaf where he studied auto mechanics. He has a profound hearing loss and is only able to hear sound in an extremely narrow range in the lower frequencies. This makes speech almost impossible for him to understand, even with the aid of a hearing aid. Although talented with his hands, Bruce, like many deaf persons, has limited verbal skills and graduated with a fifth grade reading ability. Not able to find placement in the field of auto mechanics, he moved from one short-term job to another. Then, the responsibility of marriage and a child made permanent full-time work a necessity. But in spite of an outgoing, friendly personality, his communication handicap made finding employment difficult.

Conventional methods of finding employment were not successful. He was willing to take any job where he could use his ability to work with his hands. He lacked sufficient experience and training required for entry-level positions even though he felt he could do the job if given the opportunity.

An interpreter was provided to help facilitate communication for the few interviews arranged for Bruce, but the results were unsuccessful. In a more unconventional attempt to find employment, Bruce and his employment counselor decided to "let employment find him." He incorporated his varied interests and talents in a classified ad and ran it in a few local newspapers. The results were encouraging. Interested employers called the Division of the Deaf office to set up interviews. The Division then called Bruce at home on a TDD (telecommunication device for the deaf)

and assisted in making arrangements for an interview.

Within two weeks Bruce was hired by a country club which was expanding its facilities and seeking a motivated, semi-skilled person capable of being trained to work in a variety of areas. Three days after Bruce started working, the country club purchased a TDD in order to communicate with him at home. His ability to work with his hands and his interest in a wide range of activities make him a valuable employee. Bruce has now held the position for over a year and both he and the country club are very satisfied with the placement.

VII. PRIMARY RESOURCES

New Jersey Department of Labor Division of the Deaf Labor and Industry Building Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0058 (609) 984-7281 Voice or TDD (800) 792-8339 Voice or TDD, Tollfree	State agency that acts as a clearing-house for information on deafness. Provides deaf awareness workshops, maintains interpreter referral service, publishes monthly newsletter.
National Technical Institute for the Deaf Rochester Institute of Technology One Lomb Memorial Drive P.O. Box 9887 Rochester, New York 14623 (716) 475-6418	Course offerings are in 35 areas with emphasis on scientific and technical education. Programs lead to a certificate and/or diploma, associate or bachelor's degree.
Gallaudet College Florida and 7th, N.E. Washington, D.C. 20002 (202) 651-5800	Only undergraduate liberal arts college in the United States exclusively for the deaf. Offers degrees in 26 major areas.
New Jersey Association of the Deaf 3608 Park Avenue Edison, New Jersey 08820	Non-profit statewide service organization that promotes welfare of deaf and hearing-impaired persons in education, employment and social equality.
National Association of the Deaf 814 Thayer Avenue Silver Springs, Maryland 20910 (301) 587-1788	Private, non-profit consumer organization for the deaf with 17,000 members. Serves as advocate for more than 13.5 million deaf and hearing impaired in the United States.

New Jersey Department of Labor
Division of Vocational
Rehabilitation Services
Labor and Industry Building
Room 1005
Trenton, New Jersey 08625

(609) 292-9339 (Coordinator of Services to the Deaf)

(609) 292-2919 TDD

State agency that provides rehabilitation services to eligible disabled persons, assisting them in finding employment or retaining their present job.

Marie H. Katzenbach School
for the Deaf
320 Sullivan Way
West Trenton, New Jersey 08628

(609) 883-2600 (Placement Office)

State school for the deaf operated by New Jersey Department of Education. Programs provided for pre-school, middle school, and high school age students.

Rutgers Survey of New Jersey
Deaf Persons "Employment
and Related Life Experiences
of Deaf Persons in New
Jersey"
Institute of Management and
Labor Relations
Center for Human Resources
Ryders Lane/Cook Campus
P.O. Box 231
New Brunswick, New Jersey 08903

(201) 932-9888

Survey of 832 randomly selected deaf persons to determine employment and related life situation needs of deaf persons in New Jersey.